

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the status of the claims to that as indicated below:

Claims 1-28 (canceled)

29. (currently amended) An endoscope with hygiene protection, comprising:

a cover closed at a distal end and transmissible for optical information, at least on a front face of said cover, and capable of being rolled in an axial direction of said endoscope;

at least one working channel extending parallel to said endoscope and terminating in an open mode at said distal end of said cover, said at least one working channel being connected only to said distal end of said cover and positioned between an outer side of said endoscope and an inside of said cover; and,

at least one vacuum channel, having at least one opening, and terminating at said inside of said cover and at a side of said cover facing away from a patient.

30. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, further comprising means for varying cross-sectional diameter.

31. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said cover includes a material that is airtight, watertight and impermeable to pathological microorganisms with connection of said cover to said at least one working channel to said distal end of said cover being made airtight, watertight and impermeable to pathological microorganisms.

32. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said cover is flexible and elastic and foldable in the axial direction of said endoscope.

33. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein at least a portion of said cover has an internal diameter that is larger than an external diameter of said endoscope.

34. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, further comprising a transparent pane or lens on said distal end of said cover on said front face of said cover.

35. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 34, wherein said transparent pane or said lens at least partially forms said front face of said distal end of said cover.

36. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said distal end of said cover is an optically transparent cap.

37. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 36, wherein said distal end of said cover has a wall thickness that is greater than a wall thickness of a non-distal region of said cover.

38. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said cover, when open at a proximal end, is fixable to be airtight on a shaft of said endoscope.

39. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 38, wherein said cover is conically enlarged in a vicinity of said proximal end with a portion of said cover being folded backwardly to be wrinkle-free in said vicinity of said proximal end and fixable via a chemically inert and non-toxic adhesive.

40. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, further comprising a tear thread connected to said cover at said distal end and running parallel to said endoscope on the inside of said cover.

41. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said at least one vacuum channel extends for at least a portion of a length of said cover.

42. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, further comprising means for applying sub-atmospheric pressure to said at least one vacuum channel during use of said endoscope.

43. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, further comprising depressions in an axial direction on an outer surface of said endoscope, said depressions corresponding in shape and in depth to a diameter and profile of said at least one working channel and said at least one vacuum channel.

44. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 43, wherein said depressions have a width, running in the axial direction on said

outer surface of said endoscope, which is smaller than the width of said depressions at their center points.

45. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said at least one working channel and said at least one vacuum channel are detachably connected to said distal end of said cover.

46. (previously presented) The endoscope with hygiene protection according to Claim 29, wherein said at least one working channel and said at least one vacuum channel are fixed to said distal end of said cover.

47. (currently amended) A method for attaching a hygiene protection system to an endoscope, said endoscope including:

a cover closed at a distal end and transmissible for optical information via a window, at least on a front face of said cover, and capable of being rolled in an axial direction of said endoscope;

at least one working channel extending parallel to said endoscope and terminating in an open mode at said distal end of said cover, said at least one working channel being connected only to said distal end of said cover and positioned between an outer side of said endoscope and an inside of said cover; and,

at least one vacuum channel, having at least one opening, and terminating at said inside of said cover and at a side of said cover facing away from a patient.

said method comprising the steps of:

coating an inner side of said window at said distal end of said cover for producing optical contact between said window and an optical channel of said endoscope;

introducing a distal end of said endoscope into said cover, said cover being open at a proximal end and closed at said distal end thereof;

rolling said cover onto, or unfolding said cover with, an enclosure of said endoscope and said at least one working channel; and,

applying sub-atmospheric pressure to at least one said vacuum channel.

48. (currently amended) A method for attaching a hygiene protection system to an endoscope, said endoscope including:

a cover closed at a distal end and transmissible for optical information via a window, at least on a front face of said cover, and capable of being rolled in an axial direction of said endoscope;

at least one working channel extending parallel to said endoscope and terminating in an open mode at said distal end of said cover, said at least one working channel being connected only to said distal end of said cover and positioned between an outer side of said endoscope and an inside of said cover; and,

at least one vacuum channel, having at least one opening, and terminating at said inside of said cover and at a side of said cover facing away from a patient,

said method comprising the steps of:

coating an inner side of said window at said distal end of said cover for producing optical contact between said window and an optical channel of said endoscope;

introducing a distal end of said endoscope into said cover, said cover being open at a proximal end and closed at said distal end thereof;

fixing said at least one working channel at said distal end of said cover, said at least one working channel being positioned in depressions provided on an outer surface of said endoscope;

rolling said cover onto, or unfolding said cover with, an enclosure of said endoscope and said at least one working channel; and,

applying sub-atmospheric pressure to at least one said vacuum channel.